The Resurrection.

BY J. W. BEER.

"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." 1 Cor. 15: 20.

As Easter, the accepted anniversary of our Savior's resurrection, is near at hand. I feel that some thoughts on this subject would be in place. No one can read this fifteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians without feeling that the doctrine of the resurrection is a fundamental doctrine of the gospel of Christ. In fact, Paul seems to rest the whole Christian superstructure on the resurrection of Christ, arguing that, if he did not arise from the dead, the faith of Christians is vain, and that they are yet unsaved. And he does not confine himself to the resurrection of Christ, but declares the resurrection of all, "every man in his own order." Nor does he pause here, but passes on to tell us a great deal more about the nature of the resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus. To me this, for a long time, has been a subject of absorbing interest, so much so, that I scarcely know where to begin or end, or how to confine myself to the proper limits of an article for the EVANGELIST. I shall, however, say but little about the evidences of Christ's resurrection, but confine myself mostly to the resurrection of the saints as foreshadowed by the resurrection of Christ.

I here declare it as my firm and settled conviction, that it is utterly impossible to account for the conduct of the apostles of Christ, except it be done on the ground that *they not only believed*, BUT KNEW BEYOND THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT that Jesus had risen from the dead. They did not preach this doctrine as something which they believed, but as *a fact which they knew*. They declared themselves as witnesses of the fact, and their personal knowledge of this incontrovertible fact determined their after life, their death, and, I may add, their eternal state. They rested everything on what they declared they knew. For this they suffered the loss of everything, endured unparalleled persecution, and yielded to horrid forms of death, without ever intimating that there was the faintest possibility of their being mistaken. They were good men, but *on this knowledge of the resurrection of Christ*, they rested their faith in his divine power and his divine mission; and with this faith based upon this knowledge, they preached the truth as he delivered it to them, and enjoyed the promises of God. I can understand how men can die for even an erroneous faith, but no man can understand why so many men—sane and good men—would give up all they possessed, and life itself, rather than give up a lie of their own making that would ruin themselves and all who believe it. On this view of the matter we may safely rest our faith and hope in Christ; and we may bid defiance to infidels to produce a parallel case in the history of the world, or, to produce satisfactory reasons for the conduct of these men on any other ground than the fact that *they knew that Jesus Christ had arisen from the dead.*

But Paul says, he is "The first fruits of them that are asleep." As the first-fruits are, so will be the after-fruits, or harvest. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, is not only the key that unlocks the prison of those who are asleep, but it is the key that unlocks to our faith and hope all that we can grasp or comprehend with reference to our resurrection and future condition. It is with a desire to open up to our minds some very pleasant views of the future that I have chosen my text; and the first thought I want to call up is that

WE WILL NOT SLEEP FOREVER.

Jesus the first-fruits, was asleep but a little while—only long enough to accomplish the purpose of God and to feel the necessary conditions of death in his case. His flesh did not see corruption, although it was as completely under the power of death as it could have been if it had fallen to dust. When we fall asleep in death nothing but the power of God through Christ, can awake us and if we sleep long enough, we turn to dust. When the dead in Christ shall be raised at his coming, the bodies of some will be as his was—asleep without seeing corruption, and others will be in all different states of decay, while many will still be awake, waiting and watching. But no matter in what condition he may find these bodies of dust, they will be resurrected or changed. This brings us to a second consideration—

THE NATURE OF THE NEW BODY.

I call the resurrected body or changed body a new body, because Paul teaches, by a similitude, that the body that now is "Not that body that shall be. The body that shall be will be different from the present body not only in some of its accidents but in its elements. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, it is sown a natural body." We might form some conception of a mortal body becoming immortal; of a corruptible body putting on incorruption; and even of a natural body being raised in incorruption, glory and power; but when the climax in the resurrection is reached, the "natural body" is superceded by "a spiritual body." Read carefully from the 35th verse to the end of the chapter.

The apostle knew that it would not do to drop the matter at this point. He knew that he had led their minds up to a place where they would naturally halt—where faith might falter, and so he halts, too, but only to amplify upon the last thought. This he does by declaring that "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." "It was written, The first man Adam was made a living soul," and he now declars that "the last Adam (Christ) was made a quickening spirit." "The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven." "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." See verses 45, 49. But lest there might still be misconception and error, he adds, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

Here we might let this point rest, but to make assurance doubly sure we might yet notice that Paul writes (Phil. 3: 21) that "we look for the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." And John says, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3: 2. But let us now see whether we find this doctrine verified in

CHRIST THE FIRST FRUITS.

We notice first that his body which saw no corruption was raised, and when he arose, his natural body was also superceded by a spiritual body. At what moment this was done, or what was the *modus operandi*, we know not, but it was accomplished by the power of God. The writer is of the opinion that it was before this change that he appeared to Mary and said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," etc. (John 20: 17). The Greek verb, *anabaino*, means to go up, ascend, to rise, etc. A literal translation would be, "I have not yet gone up to my Father." The thought is that he had not yet gone up or been raised to, the glory which he had with the Father before his incarnation, for which he had so earnestly prayed (John 17: 1, 5). But the time for this great change was at hand, and therefore he said to her, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." Mary went, and Jesus was transformed: there was a literal transubstantiation—a change of substance from a material, or "Natural," to "*A spiritual body*," and thus he was raised to the Father and glorified with the Father.

At this juncture the question naturally arises, did Christ show himself to his disciples, during the forty days from his resurrection till his visible ascension, in a spiritual body? Did the disciples see him in his spiritual body? Did the spiritual body eat and speak? My answer is that it is not necessary to take this view of it. How did the Lord and the angels appear to Abraham, and to Lot, and to others? Was it not by miraculous incarnation—by transubstantiation? So Jesus appeared to his disciples at different times, and in various forms, as the several occasions required. He appeared to one of the Mary's as a gardener; to two disciples, as a stranger, and to the six who went fishing, as an unknown personage. They did not recognize him by his appearance, nor by his address or voice. When the ten were in the upper room, with doors closed for fear of the Jews, he was with them, but they knew it not, but when they disputed about his resurrection, he came into their midst and said, "Peace be unto you." It is not said that he came into the room, but, "Jesus came and stood in the midst." He was, probably, in the room before, but in his "Spiritual body," which was intangible. Where was he when Thomas came, and during the following week? They saw him not again until the eighth day. Then they were in the room again, and still the discussion between Thomas and the ten was going on. Then again he came into the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." In this case it is said, "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst." Then again "He showed unto them his hands and his side; and as he had said to the ten (Lu. 24: 39), to dispel their fears, "Handle me, and see," so now to banish the unbelief of Thomas he says to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." John 20: 19, 29. Thus we see that the body of Jesus, after the resurrection, was "A spiritual body," and that "He showed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs." Acts 1: 2. He is now in his glorified, "Spiritual body," with the Father, as our mediator and advocate; and yet he is spiritually present with his people on earth.

But Paul says, "Our polity begins in the heavens from whence also we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the BODY of our HUMILIATION into a conformity with his GLORIOUS BODY, according to ENERGY by which he is ABLE even to subject all things to himself" (Philip. 3: 20, 21). I have quoted from the *Emphatic Diaglott*: see also the *Rev. ver.* This transformation prepares us to live and reign with him in his kingdom. We shall be exalted above what we call natural and material things. We shall be in a spiritual, glorified, heavenly state. We shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more: and we shall be free from sickness, sorrow, pain and death. We shall not need the sun by day, nor the moon or stars, or electric lights by night. In the spiritual state there is no night. And then we shall need no temple or material means of grace and blessing; but shall have free and direct communion and fellowship with God and the glorified. This glorified church shall be the mediatoial body, of which Christ is the head, to reign with him, and to rule the nations of earth in the world and ages to come, of which we shall know more hereafter. Let us be ready.

Lanark, Ill., Apr. 1, 1887.

Hearing the Sermon.

A little girl used to go to church. She was only between four and five years of age—quite a little girl. But she listened to her minister; she knew that he would tell her about Christ, and she wanted to learn. Once, when she reached home from church, she said, "Mother, I can tell you a little of the minister's sermon. He said, 'Touch not the unclean thing.'"

"Wishing to know whether her little daughter understood the meaning of these words, the mother said, "Then if the minister said so, I hope you will take care in the future not to touch things that are dirty."

The little girl smiled and answered,

"Oh, mother, I know very well what he meant. It was not that."

"What did he mean," asked the mother.

"He meant sin," said the child; "and it is all the same as if he had told us, 'You must not tell lies, nor do what your mother forbids you to do, nor play on Sunday, nor be cross, nor do any things that are bad and wrong.' The Bible means that a sinful thing is an unclean thing, mother."

Godliness consists not in a heart to intend to do the will of God, but in a heart to do it.—JONATHAN EDWARDS.

God is a great God, and therefore he will be sought; he is a good God, and therefore he will be found.—J. MASON.